

ARANYA

BY

Hyderabad Birding Pals | Friends of Flora & Fauna



The Florican Speaks

In this issue

The core of a magazine is its content and it sets the flavour of it. We wish to keep the aftertaste lasting, therefore I'll introduce the sections we have included in AranyA. Followed by the list of bird walks for the month, there are trip reports for each bird walk written by participants. A section is reserved for writeups on important sightings and events of the month. Starting from this issue, we are excited to introduce 'Book Reviews' section, in this we'll give information on good books related to birds, plants and wildlife. This section is moderated by Rohith Nareddy who is an avid reader and has good knowledge on books. Excellent images uploaded on our Facebook group are showcased in Photographer's Corner and images of important sightings of the month are included in a separate section. HBP members are encouraged to contribute to the magazine with images and writeups.

Every week of September built up to the excitement of seeing winter migrants. We had four bird walks this month, each had its unique sightings. This is a good season to see Lesser Floricans displaying in the grasslands of Andhra Pradesh. Our cover story showcases this bird in unique style. With the rains receding, there were many birding opportunities. Also the rush to spot the first sighting for the season of winter migrants is always there. There was a notable sighting of Shaheen Falcon at Kokapet by R K Balaji and Manoj Kumar Vittapu. As part of HBP's task to find new locations for bird walks in Telangana, Sriram Reddy and two other members gave a visit to Gubbala Mangamma Temple. There is also a writeup on the sighting of Madras Tree Shrew (*Anathana ellioti*) by Ashis Kumar Pradhan. Hope you find it interesting to read this issue. Suggestions are welcome.

Happy Birding

- Ajinkya Supekar

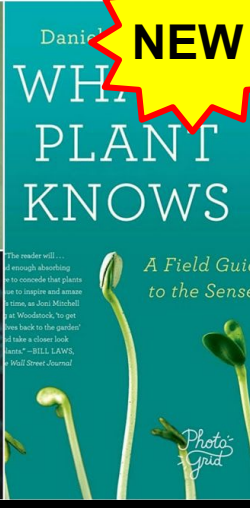
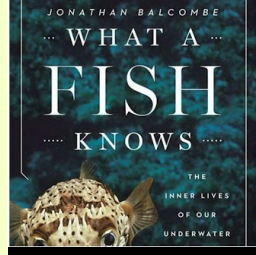
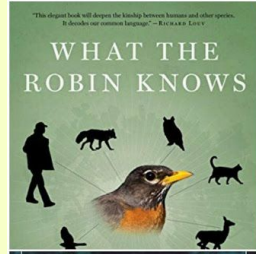
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HBP Bird Walks in September



167th Bird Walk | Osman Sagar Lake

3rd September 2017



168th Bird Walk | Manjeera Dam

10th September 2017



169th Bird Walk | Edulabad Lake

17th September 2017



170th Bird Walk | Himayat Sagar lake

24th September 2017

Osman Sagar Trip Report

By Ajinkya Supekar

167th Bird Walk at Osman Sagar Reservoir
Sunday, 3rd September, 2017

Osman Sagar, also known as Gandipet is a reservoir 20 km west of Hyderabad. It is a large water body supplying drinking water to the city. It attracts many resident and winter migrants with more than 250 bird species being reported on ebird- a bird listing website.

Hyderabad Birding Pals (HBP) organised its 167th birdwalk here, 20 members participated. The weather was sunny with plenty of sunlight. September is a time when monsoon starts to recede and there is good possibility of seeing migrants that may have a stop-over for further migration. There was still time to see warblers, migrating pipits and waders but any surprise sighting was possible.

And this happened, we reached to Westside farms at around six thirty when some members who had went ahead spotted **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* on the shore as soon as they scanned the reservoir. This bird favours sea coast and is rarely spotted inland. Sightings are reported inland when it travels to the coastal areas. This turned out to be the first sighting to be reported on ebird in Telangana state. RK Balaji and Mohit Joshi took some shots before it flew away. Meanwhile, we saw **Oriental Honey-buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, **Asian Pied Starling** *Gracupica contra*,

Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*, **Indian Robin** *Copsychus fulicatus* as we reached the reservoir after parking our vehicles. We heard calls of **Rain Quail** *Coturnix coromandelica* from the bushes, they were much less frequent as compared to few weeks back. **Black-headed Ibis** *Threskiornis melanocephalus*, flew over us. A pair of **Yellow-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus malabaricus* were in the open grassy area along the mud road.



Ashy Crowned Sparrow Lark
Eremopterix griseus

Some members went to explore the right side, where they saw **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus roseus* - some of them were immature, many feeding **Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra* and **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, **Lesser Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna javanica*, **Cotton Pygmy-Goose** *Nettapus coromandelianus* and **Indian Spot-billed Duck** *Anas poecilorhyncha*. **Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix griseus* were in a mixed group with males frequently showing their prominent courtship display.

They were often seen on the path. A **Pied Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus* was also seen. Towards the left side a large male of **Indian Peafowl** *Pavo cristatus* was seen on a bungalow, a flock of **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* flew over us in a V- formation. There was another group of **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus roseus*.



We heard many calls of **Painted Francolin** *Francolinus pictus* from the bushes along the tree-line. A flock of twenty **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* rested and foraged in the mud along the water. **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* were also nearby. There were more than hundred **River Terns** *Sterna aurantia* with one **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* in them. On the rocks scattered in the grassland were many types of larks- **Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula*, **Tawny Lark** *Galerida deva* and **Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix griseus*.

Some of us crossed the slushy area to go further to a larger grassland area, this is where usually raptors are frequently seen in winters. Here, we saw many fishing nets placed along the length of the shore. One **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* was stuck in these nets, we freed it using a blade and continued to look for birds.

At many places we saw **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* and **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*. As we walked along, **Blue-tailed Bee-eaters** *Merops philippinus* were busy foraging and **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* kept a lookout for fish from a post.



The sunlight had become strong, we decided to wrap-up and go back. This bird walk give us a new bird for Telangana state and an amazing experience of bird rescue. A total of 78 species were reported on ebird.

~ Ajinkya Supekar

Manjeera Dam Trip Report

By Ajinkya Supekar

168th Bird Walk at Manjeera Dam
10th September 2017

Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary is a riverine wetland 50 km northwest of Hyderabad in Medak district. It is a place with a good number of resident and migratory birds, in addition to being home for the Marsh Crocodile *Crocodylus palustris*. It is recognized internationally as an Important Bird Area (IBA), due to its rich bird diversity and its high preference by migratory birds.

We were 15 participants for the bird walk. The meeting point was Alwyn Cross roads at 5:30 AM. Everyone gathered and we started for the sanctuary. After passing Sangareddy we took a left towards the dam. From here the birding started. There are fields lining the road and every time we visited we got plenty of weavers and munias. That day was no different, there were many Tricoloured munias and Scaly breasted Munias feeding on paddy crop. With some 50 Baya Weavers there were Streaked Weavers and one Bengal Weaver. The light was perfect for good photographs. There were also many Red Avadavat in separate flocks.



Tricolored Munia
Lonchura malacca

Going towards the small lake to the right we saw Cinnamon Bittern flying away from us. It was easily recognisable by its distinctive colour. In the water flooded paddy fields there were Glossy Ibis feeding.

Next to them there was a bird of the structure of a Snipe. It was quite far from us, Me and Abrar spent sometime trying to identify it. After speculating all the snipe species we retired from identifying it. The cameras also were not able to get a clear image. A lone Grey Heron stood in the shallow water with reeds around as if it is claiming its area. Asian Pied Starling flocked on a tree top and Gray-headed Swamphen chased each other.



In the scrub forest and adjoining reservoir we saw some Eurasian Coots, two Brahminy kites circling in the air and many egret species diligently looking for fish. River Terns and Whiskered Terns flew over. The wooded area had couple of Pied cuckoos, Eurasian Hoopoe and Coppersmith Barbet. We went to the pump house to look for bitterns, we saw Yellow Bittern there. In the way a Grey bellied Cuckoo was perched on the fence. There were calls of Common Hawk Cuckoo too.



Glossy Ibis
Plegadis falcinellus

Manjeera Dam Trip Report

By Ajinkya Supekar

We were joined by news reporter of Telangana today, Mr. Karnakar Reddy. He requested us to show us the place where we saw breeding colony of Painted Storks. Me and Abrar went on his bike, we walked to the place only to find no birds there. We returned and he took us to adjoining lakes to see birds and overflowing water. The landscape of lush green paddy fields and water everywhere was breathtaking. We saw a Spot Billed duck with at least eight chicks following it as the show on TV. A tree was laden with Baya Weaver nests, Mr. Reddy said he published a photograph of it in the newspaper. In the reeds with flowing water there we nests of Streaked Weavers too.



Meanwhile Phani Bhaiya and others had finished with birding in the sanctuary. We all met near the village and started back to Hyderabad.

Bitterns, weavers and finches made the birdwalk interesting. A total of 83 species were reported on ebird.



Red Avadavat *Amandava formosa*



Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica*



Greater Coucal
Centropus sinensis

Asian Koel, Manjeera Dam, Sangareddy, Hyderabad. Sep/2017

Edulabad Lake Trip Report

By Hari Krishna Adepu

169th Birdwalk at Edulabad Lake, Hyderabad
17th September 2017

Edulabad is a village in Ranga Reddy district in Telangana, India. It falls under Ghatkesar mandal. Edulabad has a big lake known as Edulabad Water Reservoir (EBWR) having a surface area of 5 sq. Kilometers. Although suffering from heavy industrial pollution, this lake hosts a variety of flora and fauna and also is the lifeline of the agricultural farms surrounding this lake.

We started at 6AM from LFJC, Habsiguda which was our meeting point. We reached the lake by 7AM, and started our Birding session. The activity was quite low, and we hardly spotted any waders, which is, normally the other way round, but the lake was brimming with water, which could be the reason for not having the waders around. We started our Birding with the surprise looks of the villagers around the lake who were curious to know what we were doing with all our cameras and binocs. We were welcome by a couple of snails as we started our bird watching.

The day started with the calls of the Ashy Prinias coming from almost all the directions. Followed by the Ashy Prinia, was a group of Red Avadavats and Juvenile Baya Weavers who were busy pecking on the jawari seeds in the nearby farms. It was a treat to the eyes watching them pecking away on those seeds. At around 9:30 AM, we thought of calling it a day and were getting ready for the group picture when we saw a bunch of Teri-Coloured Munias picking in the fields behind us.

We finished taking our group pic and rushed to the fields to get a good sight of the munias, both the tri-coloured and Scaly-breasted munias. It was great watching them having their breakfast, completely oblivious of our presence, thus giving us a good opportunity to click some amazing pictures.

Finally the day ended at around 10:30AM with 3 Pied Kingfishers fighting in the air, chasing each other. It was a great day overall, with a total of 52 species being recorded that day. It would be a great place for Birding in winters with the arrival of all the migrant species and will be explored further in our future birdwalks.



Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*
and Tri-colored Munia *Lonchura malacca*



Ashy Prinia
Prinia socialis



Black-winged kite
Elanus caeruleus



Tricoloured Munia
Lonchura malacca

Dr. Balakrishna Murar's Photography

Himayat Sagar Trip Report

By Abhishek Ravindra

170th Bird Walk at Himayat Sagar lake
Sunday, 24th September 2017

Himayat Sagar is one of the biggest reservoirs of Hyderabad which was potentially built by the Nizam to supply drinking water to the city. As the name suggests it looks less like a reservoir and more like an ocean when water level is up to the brim.

The lake is an abode to many migrants in the winter and this particular bird walk was kept in the end of the month keeping in mind the arrival of migrants. The walk started with a brain fever not any disease but the call of Common-Hawk Cuckoo followed by few White-Throated Kingfishers on the wire. There was heavy rains the previous night resulting in formation of puddles on the motorable road in the backwaters. The puddles forced us to park the car far from the reservoir and walk. The sightings started with few Yellow-Eyed Babblers on a thicket posing to the camera unfortunately my camera settings were kept to shoot birds in night because of the nocturnal birding i did the previous night hence the pics were overexposed. The walk had just started when i saw few Siberian Stonechats which are small migratory birds which breed in temperate Asia and spend the winters in South and South-East Asia and Africa. The list of migrants didn't end with the Siberian Stonechat as we sighted lot of Blue-Tailed bee-eaters which breed in Central and Northern India and come down South in the winters. Next to be sighted was the Three Musketeers a trio of male Red Avadavats a gorgeously coloured bird especially the males of which are blood red in colour.



Ashy-crowned sparrow-Lark
Eremopterix griseus

It was not long when we heard a continuous 2 noted call from the grassland it was was none other than Rain Quail a little elusive beauty which always remains hidden in the grassland but sometimes in eagerness to find its mate brings it on top of rocks which allows the photographers to fire up there bazooka like cameras and take few shots. The next bird was not much different with exactly the same behaviour but a rather loud and unpleasant call it was Painted Francolin.



Indian River Tern
Sterna aurantia

There were lot of weavers and there vibrant yellow colours were satisfying all the photographers eagerness to make a beautiful picture. The grasslands had plenty of poser Prinias and stonechats. Cormorants were basking in the sun with there wings open so there feathers could dry up it is a daily routine they do because they lack water resistant feathers and it looks like the black beauties are asking for a hug. Egrets and Herons were busy fishing in the Reservoir offering plenty of action shots showing of there breakfast and teasing the tired photographers with an empty stomach. The sun was beating down hard as we saw terns in flight and few plovers and stilts wading in the banks as we started to retreat .The walk back was long and the larks and pipits were making it even more difficult as identifying each and every one of them and moving was taking time. Half way we saw a Black-winged Kite perched very far and a couple of Barn Swallows perched on twigs beside the water

On reaching the car we saw a couple of White-browed wagtails posing adjacent to the puddle and offering good shots overall the bird walk was decent and the harsh sun resulted in an early wrap up.



Bay-backed Shrike
Lanius vittatus



Cattle Egret
Bubulcus ibis



White-browed Wagtail
Motacilla maderaspatensis



Plain Prinia
Prinia inornata

The Florican Speaks

By Gopalakrishna Iyer

Let me first thank you, those birders of Hyderabad Birding Pals who took off time from their busy schedule to come all the way over to Rollapadu, Kurnool to see me. Last year, while looking for new places, I came to Osman Sagar at Hyderabad where I could only meet a few of you guys.

I, Mr. Florican the Lesser (*Sypheotides indicus*), would like to introduce myself to my dearest birding friends. I belong to the smaller and slimmer ones of the bustard family. Sad to say that I have very few friends which is why I am classified in Schedule 1 and listed as endangered in today's world, the IUCN Red List I mean.



Look wise I have a distinctive contrasting black and white colour with special elongated spatulate black plumes on my head and she is in a very camouflaging brown all time. I reside in tall widespread grasslands with a little bit of bushes in between. I also enjoy living among the cotton and millet crops. I stay in the shade most of the time except during late monsoon when I come out and jump in joy.

I also like scattering dust all around my body during the evenings which keeps the parasites at bay. I also look for my partner during this time. I do not like going abroad and prefer to stay in the Indian subcontinent, people call me endemic to this region, but I do travel locally. I usually remember the places I visit and prefer to revisit the same places again year after year, especially during the end of monsoons.



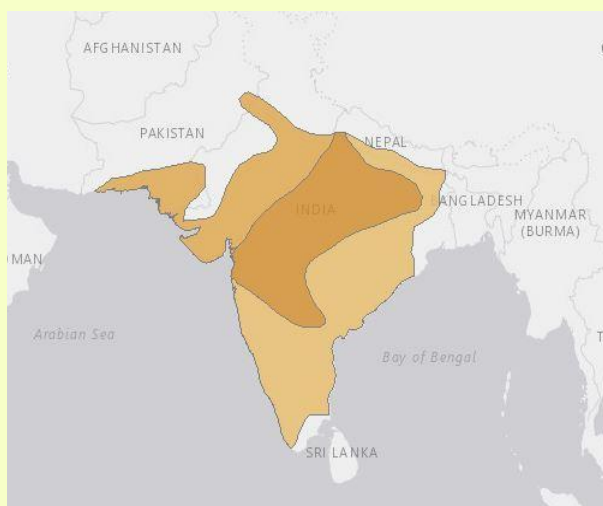
I am omnivorous and like a variety of food like grasshoppers, beetles, worms, lizards, frogs, insects and caterpillars which I do it by a dash and grab system or by slowly creeping onto them followed by a sudden ambush attack. I also sometimes go vegetarian in between to have some berries, some herbs, tender shoots and seeds. I prefer eating during the early mornings and evenings unless when I have had a long flight which make so hungry that I eat all the time.

The time towards the end of monsoon is the time when we decide to have a family. But it's not easy and my lady only gets impressed when I jump above the grass with my legs folded and

The Florican Speaks

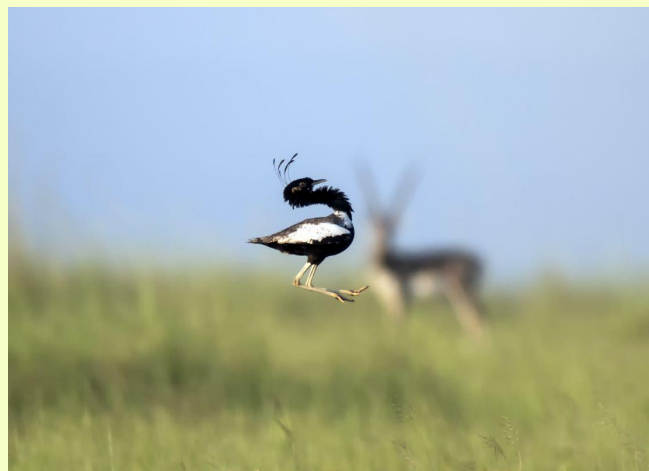
By Gopalakrishna Iyer

call to her mid-air, courtship display it seems which is scientifically known as the lekking mating system. With a flutter of wings and a two meter jump I believe I tend to dazzle and charm her to establish a family. Well, I jump several times both in the mornings and evenings continuously calling for her, over five hundred times a day. This is also the time that I became the most vulnerable to attack. Hunters had gunned several of my friends down just because our behavior during this time was just simply very inquisitive for them.



Geographic range of Lesser Florican

Meanwhile while jumping, I also alert my other competing friends to keep off as I like to take control of an area of 5-6 acres, the approximate area she likes to live in with me. Once she is convinced she calls me with a special whistling sound and spreads her wings on the ground accepting my proposal. She then takes care of the nest in which she lays about 4-5 eggs and solely takes care of our young ones for about 20-30 days.



Courtship display of the Lesser Florican

Then they are capable to fend for themselves.

There is an urgent need for protecting my friends and me and my home, the grasslands, which are being destroyed for agricultural and industrial purposes. The varying rainfall has also been of concern as my home like places get destroyed due to lack or excess of water. I worry about the constantly increasing pressure on the grasslands which I believe is going to increase further in the near future. People take a count of my family and me during the period which begins from late August till the end of October. There are just about 2200 of my friends out there and it's just not improving. With the 'Project Bustards' put in by the Indian government we hope to get some preservation of our grassland homes and their ecology. Looking forward to meet my dear birding pals every season.

Photographs: Sriram Reddy and Raghu Nathan

Rescue of a Little ringed Plover

By Ajinkya Supekar

167th Bird walk at Osman Sagar, Hyderabad
3rd September 2017

We were at Osman Sagar birdwalk conducted by Hyderabad Birding Pals (HBP). Many HBP members had participated and all were busy photographing in the abundant sunlight. We had split into groups to cover maximum area so as to see more birds. I and Abrar were some distance behind Phani bhaiya, Anil S Kumar and Kalyan Anna along the shore of the reservoir. I was scanning the ground and saw a plover jumping and not able to fly. Instantly we realised that it is trapped in a fishing net and needs help. Abrar and I rushed towards it and tried to detangle it. It was heavily stuck in the nylon net. Relieving it by hands was difficult so we needed some sharp object. We both had none so called Phani bhaiya. Till then we covered the Little ringed Plover with handkerchief to calm it down. Phani bhaiya had previous experience in this and seeing that there is no other option than to do the job with hands, we started to remove the jumble of threads around the Plover's neck first. Seeing us huddled at a place attracted the attention of RK Balaji and we asked if he has something to cut the threads. He said yes and gave us a blade. We were relieved to have the blade as it made the task much easier. I split the blade into two and started cutting the threads while Phani bhaiya held the Plover and guided me and Abrar. We tried to give it water in the cap of a water bottle but it did not drink. After finishing the neck portion, we freed the abdomen. Once the wings were freed, they were held to keep the bird stable. The legs had lot of threads and they were removed.

Soon the Plover was free of the fishing net and was ready to fly. Meanwhile, Anil sir took some excellent shots of the rescue. Phani Bhaiya kept the bird low in his hands and released it. It took no time to open its wings and take to the sky. We saw it fly some distance and land to preen its feathers. It joined another Plover nearby and started to find food on ground. We gave a sigh and felt happy that it's fine now. Thanks to the quick execution of Phani bhaiya, we did not have any difficulty and without the blade the task would take a lot of effort.

It was my first experience of freeing a bird. Looking at the trapped plover, I realised how extensively we are affecting birds which are helpless and can't express their plight. Going around Hyderabad and looking for birds is a thing I did for myself but moments like these required humility to give back to the things I admired the most.



The Plover in safe hands before release



The Plover was badly stuck in the fishing net



Giving water to it



Release!

Terek Sandpiper Sighting

By Ajinkya Supekar

On 3rd September, 2017, it was 167th HBP bird walk at Osman Sagar. Some of the members spotted Terek Sandpiper as soon as they reached the reservoir. This was the first report of Terek Sandpiper from Telangana state on ebird- a bird listing website. HBP member RK Balaji saw it and his and Mohit Joshi's image helped us to identify it. This sighting made us think that how the bird reached here, as it is seen mostly in coastal areas of India and rarely inland. It could be because it was migrating and decided to have a stopover. Lets know about the bird.

Terek Sandpiper *xenus cinereus*

22–25 cm; 50–126 g; wingspan 57–59 cm.

This sandpiper is named after the Terek river that flows through Georgia and Russia into the Caspian sea¹. Initially *tringa terek*, after a review of its DNA sequence by Pereira & Baker in 2005, it was placed in genus *xenus* and is now conventionally accepted as *xenus cinereus*².

Distribution:

It is a bird of the Palaearctic ecozone that extends across all of Europe, Asia north of the foothills of the Himalayas, North Africa, and the northern and central parts of the Arabian peninsula³. It breeds in forest tundra from Finland and Western Russia to Eastern Siberia. It is a migratory bird that winters along the coasts of SW Africa and around Indian Ocean to Australia⁴.

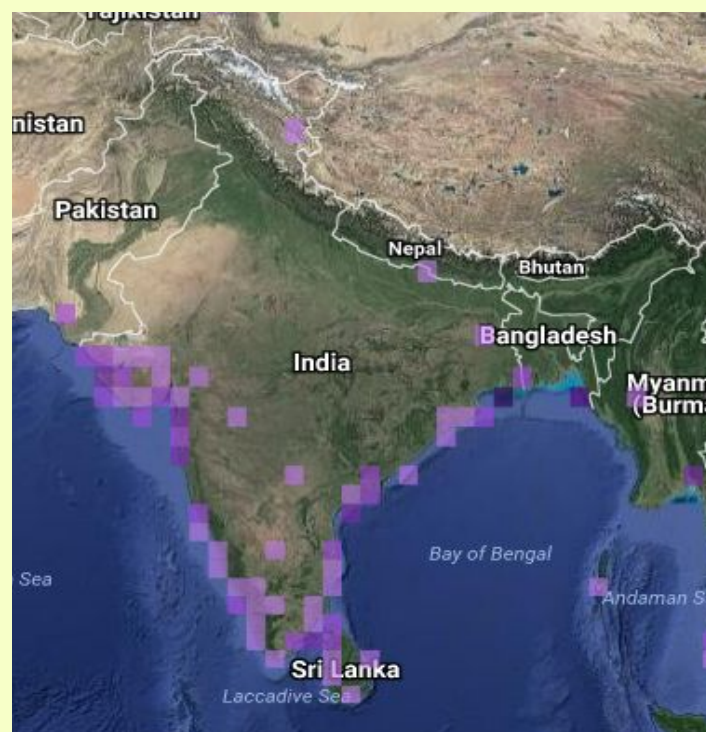
Description:

It is slightly larger than common sandpiper⁵, has a distinctive, long upcurved bill and short orange yellow legs. The eye is brown and the bill black. Sexes are similar and in breeding season, the main difference is stronger and increased streaking across the head. Adult breeding bird has blackish scapular lines².

Habitat

Feeding habitat- Mostly forages in the open, on soft wet intertidal mudflats.

Roosting habitat- Preferring to roost in or among mangroves, birds may perch in branches or roots up to 2 m from the ground, or beneath them in the shade on hot days. Occasionally, they roost in dead trees or among tangled driftwood².



Range map of Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

Terek Sandpiper Sighting

By Ajinkya Supekar

Life Cycle:

The oldest recorded Terek Sandpiper was 17 years, found in Belarus⁶. It is a semi-colonial breeder with the breeding season in May–August. Nests are a shallow depression in open or short vegetation, close to water, typically lined with grass and debris. Between two and five eggs (usually four) are laid. Incubation is mainly undertaken by females and takes 23–24 days, with fledging taking place at the age of 15 days²

Feeding:

A very active feeder, runs here and there erratically to chase prey. Terek Sandpipers have been recorded eating crustaceans, insects, seeds, molluscs and arachnids. They forage differently in relation to prey type and timing. When consuming crab species, the birds forage more slowly, with less pecking into the substrate than when they forage for polychaete worms. Larger crabs are often carried to pools and washed before eating, and many crabs are released alive, being rejected for unknown reasons. Foraging for worms involves 'runs' from half to six metres where birds peck deeply into the substrate numerous times in order to catch prey. Piersma (1986) recorded birds foraging most actively at the beginning of low tide, when crabs become readily available and the birds themselves have not foraged for approximately 21 hours. The birds then become more selective after about two hours of foraging, when crabs are at peak abundance and birds have consumed a level of prey making digesting larger quantities of

food difficult. Activity then increases slightly as prey become less available with the incoming tide and presumably birds have passed a digestion "bottleneck"².

Threats

Habitat loss: both direct and indirect, inappropriate land management practices.

Disturbance: Intensive oil exploration and extraction, and reduction in river flows due to upstream water diversion, Hunting (mostly in China), Pollution, Competition for food resources with humans could also occur. Disturbance from human recreational activities is another significant threat that has increased in recent years.

When Terek Sandpipers are startled, Piersma (1986) noted they quickly congregate into tight flocks and cease foraging, and reduced foraging capacity may impact migration success².

Climate change: Global warming and associated changes in sea level are likely to cause long term impacts on the breeding, staging and non-breeding grounds of migratory waders. Iwamura and colleagues (2013) found that rises in sea level could cause a dramatic collapse of population flow of this species caused by intertidal habitat loss. Population flow could reduce by 25% with a 100 cm sea level rise².

Terek Sandpiper Sighting

By Ajinkya Supekar

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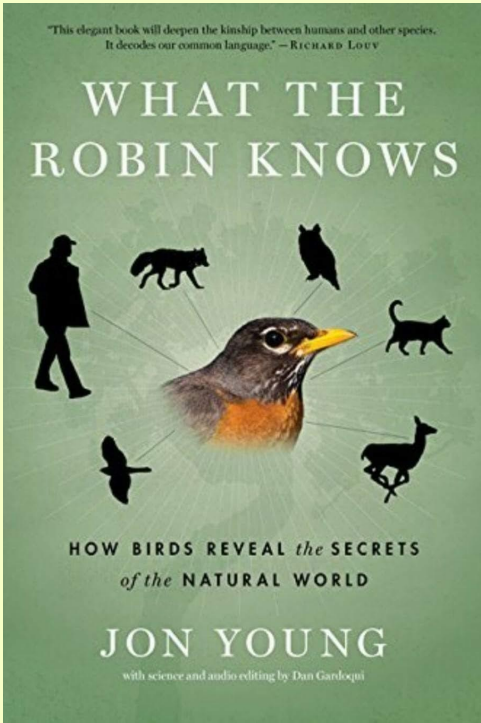
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Photographs:



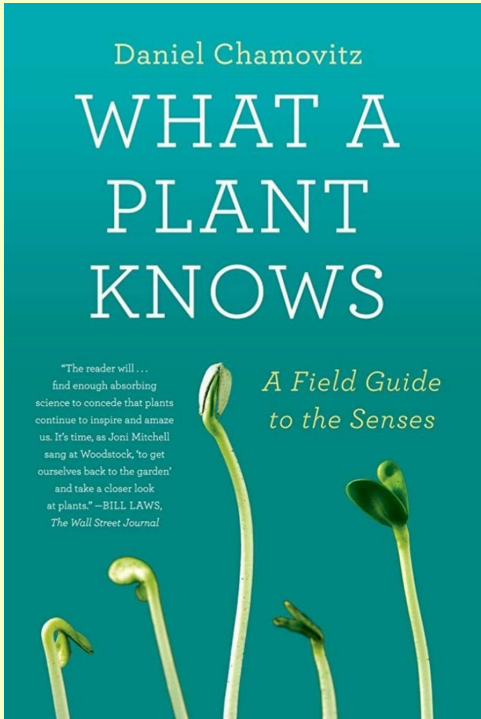
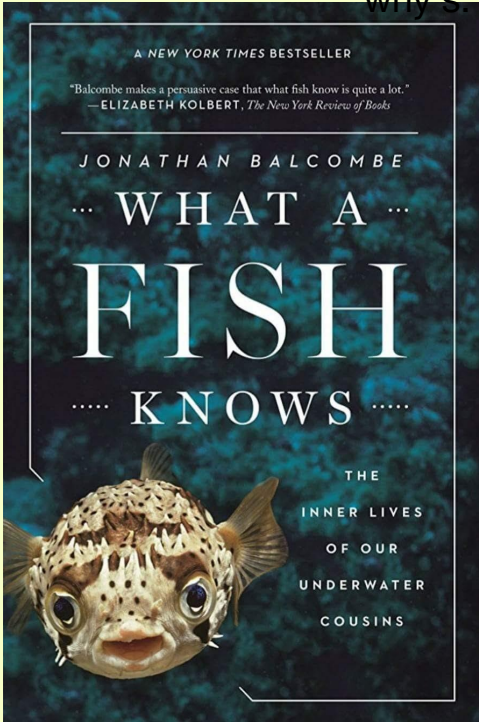
Book Review

By Rohith Nareddy



While watching birds, apart from its use in identifying them correctly have you ever wondered what the different calls of a bird mean or thought that there is more than what meets the eye and ear. If yes, then you should read the book 'What The Robin Knows' by Jon Young. Using the ubiquitous American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) as a window to understand its interactions with the surroundings and its denizens he presents us with some universal traits that give us insights into the life of birds. After reading this book every chirp you hear will bring forth an endless questionnaire of what's and why's.

About 71% of earth's surface is covered by water and is home to a myriad life forms, some terrifying some breath-taking and many more in between. Jonathan Balcombe in his book 'What A Fish Knows' takes us through a series of anecdotes starting with the basics of how fish are equipped to understand their surroundings and how they interact with the environment and the various living forms around them.



One of the most contentious topic even amongst nature enthusiasts is the subject of food and very often in the course of discussion someone or the other quotes the science experiment by JC Bose that proved plants have life. Leaving that debate to some other day, have you ever wondered how or what that life is and how different is it from all the other forms of life forms that move. That is the subject of the book 'What A Plant Knows' by Daniel Chamovitz. The author through many stories and studies gives us a perspective of how plants experience the world. A first step to understand the most abundant life form on the planet.

Birding at Gubbala Mangamma Temple

By Sriram Reddy

Gubbala Mangamma Talli Temple (17.347643, 81.305876) is a temple town in the Khammam district, in the state of Telangana. The altitude of this place is 253 m (830 ft). The climate here is tropical. Vegetation around this temple comprises of semi evergreen and deciduous forest. It is on the fringes of Papikonda National Park in Andhra Pradesh. This hotspot is 342 km from Hyderabad and 32 km from Ashwaraopet, the nearest town to this temple. The small stream near the temple area literally divides Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states.

It is an important biodiversity hotspot blessed with both eastern and western ghat bird species. This place is least explored by birders/photographers. There are more than 100 interesting bird species found in area surrounding this temple. Several species of birds found here are rare for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states. Common flameback *Dinopium javanense*, Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus bracteatus*, White-rumped Needletail *Zoonavena sylvatica*, Heart-spotted Woodpecker *Hemicircus canente*, Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus flaviventris*, Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis* are reported for the first time in Telangana from this area.

The important birds which can be seen here are:

- 1) **Malabar Trogon** *Harpactes fasciatus*
- 2) **Green-billed Malkoha** *Phaenicophaeus tristis*
- 3) **Green Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula aenea*
- 4) **Banded Bay Cuckoo** *Cacomantis sonneratii*
- 5) **Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*
- 6) **Greater Yellownape** *Chrysophlegma flavinucha*
- 7) **Streak-throated Woodpecker** *Picus xanthopygaeus*
- 8) **Rufous Woodpecker** *Micropternus brachyurus*
- 9) **Greater Flameback** *Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus*
- 10) **Common Flameback** *Dinopium javanense*
- 11) **Heart-spotted Woodpecker**
- 12) **Orange Minivet** *Pericrocotus flammeus*
- 13) **Scarlet Minivet** *Pericrocotus speciosus*
- 14) **Black-crested Bulbul** *Pycnonotus flaviventris*
- 15) **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus paradiseus*
- 16) **Hair-crested Drongo** *Dicrurus hottentottus*
- 17) **Crested Goshawk** *Accipiter trivirgatus*
- 18) **White-rumped Needletail** *Zoonavena sylvatica*
- 19) **Alexandrine Parakeet** *Psittacula eupatria*
- 20) **Indian Nuthatch** *Sitta castanea*

Birding at Gubbala Mangamma Temple

By Sriram Reddy



Malabar Trogon
Harpactes fasciatus



Green-billed Malkoha
Phaenicophaeus tristis



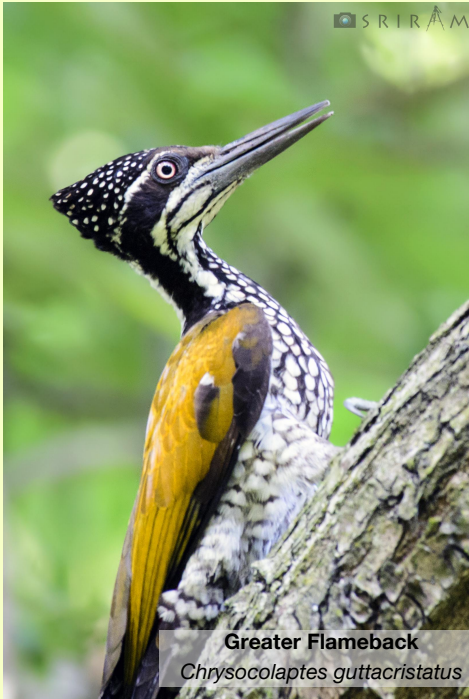
Greater Yellownape
Chrysophlegma flavinucha



Rufous Woodpecker
Micropternus brachyurus



Orange Minivet
Pericrocotus flammeus



Greater Flameback
Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus



Greater Racket-tailed Drongo
Dicrurus paradiseus



Common Flameback
Dinopium javanense

Sighting of a Madras Tree Shrew (*Anathana ellioti*)

By Ashis Kumar Pradhan

Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Telangana
29th September, 2017

Tree shrews comprise a very special group among mammals with all the 19 species found only in Asia across the globe. Only three species of tree shrews dwell in India in moist tropical forests. They are well known for their highest brain-to-body mass ratio of any animals even higher than humans and for their interesting social behavior. Tree shrews have attracted relatively less biological attention which is why very little is known about their ecology and behavior in the wild. This short note is an attempt to bring such an enigmatic life into notice before it silently qualifies for the threatened category on IUCN Red List as a result of its rapid habitat disturbance and destruction by human beings.



Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR), Telangana

During one of our birding sessions to Amrabad tiger reserve, the northern part of

Nallamala forest, a tree shrew was spotted and photographed. The tree shrew was seen climbing a tree encircled by fruiting *Lantana* bush (a common thorny shrub found in deciduous forests) at about 6-7 feet height from the ground. Luckily enough it was spotted before it spotted us, but as soon as it stared at us it immediately slide into the bush from where it peeped.



Madras Tree Shrew
Anathana ellioti

Though tree shrews resemble a squirrel in appearance they have their own distinctive features. The tree shrew that was photographed had an elongated snout or muzzle and a pair of immovable ears with large pinna and hairs.

Sighting of a Madras Tree Shrew (*Anathana ellioti*)

By Ashis Kumar Pradhan

The dorsal part of the body had brown coat covered with hairs and the ventral surface of the body was nearly white. It had a white oblique shoulder stripe and a very distinct long bushy tail almost of same length to the body, that distinguish it from rats, other house shrews and tree shrews. Based on the distribution and the aforementioned features, the tree shrew that was photographed was identified to be Southern or Madras tree shrew and not Northern tree shrew or Nicobar treeshrew.

Out of the three tree shrews that inhabit India, Madras or Southern tree shrew (*Anathana ellioti*, named after Sir Walter Elliot, Waterhouse, 1850) is found in Peninsular India in the eastern ghat forests like Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Telangana. There are very few past reports of it from this place. Madras Tree shrews are active during daytime. The habitat of Indian or Madras Tree shrew is that of moist forest with deciduous trees and shrubs covering the forest floor. Their diet consists of insects and various types of plant matter. They are often seen eating the fruit of *Lantana*. They are generally fond of water for both drinking and bathing.



Typical habitat of Madras Tree Shrew, Mallela theertham, ATR

So finding them near a stream in a forest is highly possible with *Lantana* nearby and that was exactly the habitat where we spotted the tree shrew. Predators of tree shrews include snakes, birds of prey, and small carnivores. Tree shrews are known to be a prey for Crested Hawk eagles, a commonly found eagle in Nallamalla forest, Telangana and a raptor that has always been sighted by us in all our birding trips to Nallamalla range.

We have also documented Indian and Oriental scops-owls from the place the tree shrew was observed, possibly another predator of tree shrews although tree shrews are diurnal. Based on this prey-predator relationship and the habitat observed, Amrabad tiger reserve may constitute a balanced ecosystem for it.

Sighting of a Madras Tree Shrew (*Anathana ellioti*)

By Ashis Kumar Pradhan

Although Madras tree shrew includes the word “tree” in its name, it is in fact uncommon to see one climb a tree. They usually climb a tree as a means of escape may be an adaptation to escape predation, or during playing with younger ones, or to self-groom. They spend most of their time hidden on the forest floors searching for food so as to meet their metabolic demand, or inspecting their territories.



The reproductive behavior of *A. ellioti* is still an area to be explored. Usually they lead a solitary life and may pair only during the breeding time. In general tree shrews build two separate nests, the young ones sleep in separate nests from the parents.

They communicate through vocalization and by the secretion of a wide array of chemicals by specialized glands that are unique to the individual animal. The forests that are important to the tree shrews are also known to be of great importance to a wide range of plants, mammals, birds and invertebrates, many of which are endemic. By developing and implementing conservation strategies, which include treeshrew conservation requirements in the forests, the overall biological diversity of these unique ecosystems could be better protected.



Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR), Telangana

Photographer’s Corner

Blue Faced Malkoha
(Phaenicophaeus viridirostris)

Vijay Dasari



Photographer's Corner

Blue Tailed Bee-eater (*Merops philippinus*)

RK Balaji



Photographer's Corner

Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*)

Harish Kotari



© Harish Kotari

Photographer's Corner

Purple Heron
(Ardea purpurea)

Manoj Kumar



Photographer's Corner

Red-naped Ibis (*Pseudibis papillosa*)

Mohit Joshi



Photographer's Corner

Blue Jay
(*Cyanocitta cristata*)

Krishnan Kalpat



Photographer's Corner

Greater Flamingo
(*Phoenicopterus roseus*)

Ashwin Kadiyala



Photographer's Corner

Yellow-eyed Babbler (*Chrysomma sinense*)

Sunny Inaganti



Photographer's Corner

Oriental Skylark
(*Alauda gulgula*)

Subrata Kool



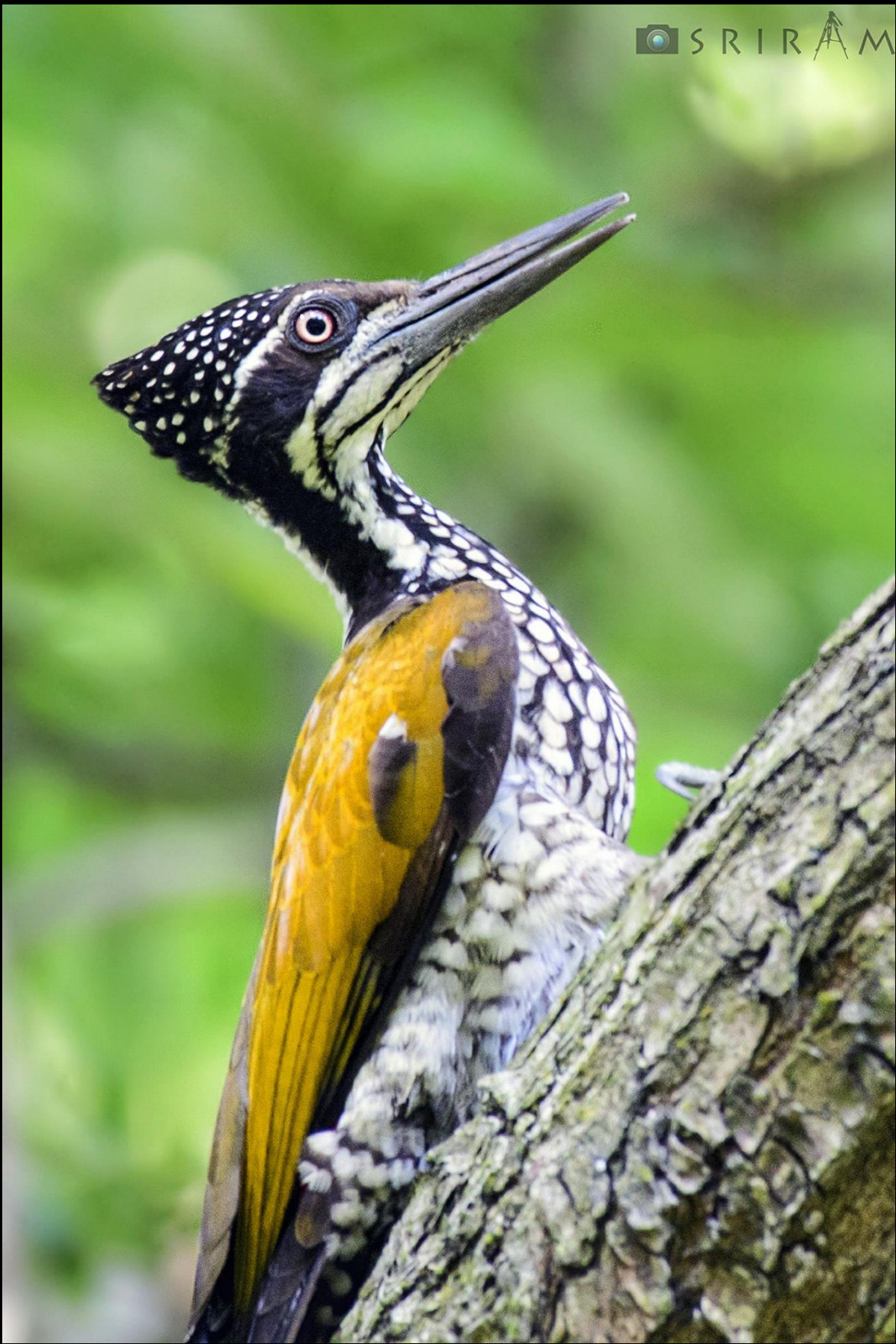
Important Sightings of The Month



Yellow Legged Buttonquail (*Turnix tanki*)
Conservation Status: Least Concern

Naresh Vadrevu
Kurnool, AP

Important Sightings of The Month



Greater Goldenback (*Chrysocolaptes lucidus*)
Conservation Status: Least Concern

Sriram Reddy
Khammam, TS

Important Sightings of The Month



SRIRAM

Orange Minivet (*Pericrocotus flammeus*)
Conservation Status: Least Concern

Sriram Reddy
Khammam, TS

Important Sightings of The Month



Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)
Conservation Status: Near Threatened

Raghu Nathan
Hyderabad, TS

Important Sightings of The Month



Common Goldenback (*Dinopium javanense*)
Conservation Status: Least Concern

Sriram Reddy
Khammam, TS

Important Sightings of The Month



Shaheen Falcon (*Falco perigrinus perigrinator*)
Conservation Status: Least Concern

RK Balaji
Hyderabad, TS

Credits and Contact

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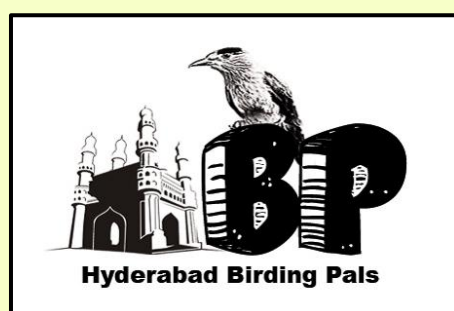
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